

**A NOTE ON THE CORRESPONDENCE
BETWEEN F.F. LAIDLAW AND E.B.
WILLIAMSON, 1903-1932**

After reading the beautifully written biography of Dr F.F. Laidlaw by Dr E. PINHEY (1983, *Odonatologica* 12: 315-330), I looked in the E.B. Williamson correspondence file in the Insect Division, Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, and located letters from Dr Laidlaw there which may be of further interest.

Apparently Mr Williamson wrote to Mr Laidlaw soon after receiving a Concilium Bibliographicum card giving a reference to one of Laidlaw's early papers on Odonata. The first of Laidlaw's letters is dated April 20, 1903; the next is a postcard postmarked May 19, 1903. Friendly letters followed at irregular intervals, ending with the last one of July 15, 1932, prior to Mr Williamson's death in February 1933. The letters deal with odonatological subjects and contain much the same information concerning his personal life as recorded by Dr Pinhey. All of the three cards and 91 letters are handwritten and many give the date only for the day and month, and some are without date. The only carbon copies of letters to Dr Laidlaw are for

two written after Mr Williamson came to Michigan in 1929, dated December 8, 1931 and November 9, 1932.

Throughout this period of 29 years, there was an exchange of specimens of Odonata and reprints of papers that enriched their collections and personal libraries. (Copies of all of Laidlaw's papers on Odonata are in the E.B. Williamson Library). Photographs were also exchanged. The first one from Laidlaw was received May 20, 1905, and is very similar to the portrait of later date reproduced in *Odonatologica*. Another received in 1917 is an excellent one of him in military uniform, and the last one received in 1919 is of himself and family. After starting to medical school, Mr Laidlaw expressed surprise to find that he liked it so much. A letter of December 18, 1905 tells of his expectation "to be Santa Claus in the childrens' ward at Bartholomew's Hospital". The one of October 30, 1909 mentions his engagement to be married to a nurse; that of November 10, 1911 announces the arrival of "a charming daughter", and a few months later thanks were sent to Mr Williamson for a gift of a spoon for the baby. The arrival of twins is mentioned a year later.

Mr Williamson and Dr Laidlaw exchanged invitations to visit each other, but they never met in person. Perhaps because of this and because of their main interest in different geographical areas, they did not have as close a relationship as between Dr Laidlaw and Dr Tillyard although the Williamson-Laidlaw correspondence was initiated four and a half years prior to Laidlaw's acquaintance with Dr Tillyard.

In leafing through all of Dr Laidlaw's letters to Mr Williamson, I often noticed remarks that revealed the love of his profession, a wide range of interests in natural history, and altogether a delightful personality.

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